

REMARKS

The present invention is a method of issuing electronic coupons, a data processing system for issuing coupons, a coupon system and a method of issuing and redeeming coupons. In accordance with the invention, a master coupon is made available at an electronic site. The master coupon is accessed for copying as a customer coupon for a customer. A benefit associated with the customer coupon is established which is based on properties defined by the master coupon. The benefit of the customer coupon is shared with another coupon by copying the customer coupon as a child coupon to a reserved site for another customer. The child coupon inherits the benefits associated with the customer coupon. The benefit of the customer coupon is modified in response to the sharing of the benefit of the customer coupon with the child coupon for encouraging customers to share the benefit with other customers. See page 3, lines 2-5 and 11-15; page 9, lines 15-27 through page 10, lines 1-23; and page 12, lines 15-26 through page 13, lines 1-17, of the specification, for a discussion of sharing of coupons and the obtaining of benefits.

At the outset it is noted that the Office Action indicates that claims 21-41 are pending in the application. However, only claims 21-31 and 35-37 stand rejected on the record. It is requested that the Examiner indicate on the record that claims 32-34 and 38-40 are allowed since no grounds of rejection have been applied thereto.

Claim 41 stands objected to regarding the recitation of "reader" in claim 41 which has been deleted as the Examiner has requested.

Claims 21-31 and 35-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim

the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Claim 21 and claim 38 have been amended to recite "accessing said master coupon; copying a customer coupon for a customer". Claim 25 has been amended to conform the preamble to claim 21. Claim 26 has been amended to recite that "the benefit is shared for a time period". Claim 35 has been amended to recite a coupon system comprising a data processing system which issues a master coupon, a customer coupon and a child coupon, in combination with the recitation of the master coupon's attributes, the customer coupon's attributes and the child customer's attributes. This subject matter particularly points out and distinctly claims the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 38, which has not been rejected, has been amended to particularly point out the scope of the subject matter sought to be patented. Moreover, new claim 41 further limits claim 38 defining the modified benefit to be a benefit additional to the benefit defined by the master coupon to credit the customer for the benefit storing. Support for claim 41 is found at page 9, lines 17-20 and page 10, lines 10-16 of the specification.

Claims 35-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over United States Patent 6,336,099. This ground of rejection is traversed for the following reasons.

Claim 35 recites a coupon system comprising a data processing system which issues a master coupon, a customer coupon and a child coupon and wherein: the master coupon comprises a first indicator describing at least one business at which the master coupon can be redeemed, a second indicator describing a time period during which the master coupon is valid, a third indicator describing at least

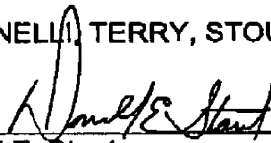
one additional parameter which effects validity of the master coupon, and a fourth indicator describing the benefit of the master coupon to a redeemer, with the benefit being variable and depending upon at least one event occurring after issuance of the master coupon; the customer coupon comprises a copy of the master coupon reserved for another customer at the reserve site; and the child coupon is copied from the customer coupon and shares a benefit between the customer coupon and the child coupon; and the customer coupon has a benefit which is modified by sharing the benefit with the child coupon. This subject matter has no counterpart in Barnett et al.

Barnett et al describe a method and system for electronic distribution of product redemption coupons to remote personal computers located at user's homes. A coupon distributor 16 controls the issuance of coupons. See column 6, lines 52-65. However, the disclosed system does not disclose a coupon system comprising a data processing system which issues a master coupon, a customer coupon and a child coupon with the attributes of the master, customer and child coupons as defined in claims 35-37. There is no basis in the record why a person of ordinary skill in the art would be led to modify the teachings of Barnett et al to arrive at the claimed subject matter. The Examiner's rejection of claims 35-37 was premised upon providing no weight to the claimed language involving the coupons. However, the claimed system for issuing the coupons, including the coupon's attributes, is both statutory subject matter and furthermore, defines a system in which all limitations must be given weight. When the limitations are given weight, the subject matter of claims 35-37 is not rendered obvious by Barnett et al.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (0171.38583X00) and please credit any excess fees to such Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments

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